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The Misadventures of Ricky Ranger: The Bully and the Bicycle

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Supplemental Chapter 6 - The Ride Home

The Bully and the Bicycle

The afternoon sun hung low, turning the road gold. Ricky pedaled slowly past the old oak tree, the wind tugging at his jacket. Johnny's SUV had disappeared down the hill hours ago, but Ricky could still hear the echo of his cousin's voice – calm, steady, sure.

You know what you can do now.

He smiled a little. The words felt like armor.

The neighborhood was quiet except for the hum of his tires and the whisper of leaves skimming the pavement. He passed the ditch where Brian had thrown his hat months ago. The water was clear now, reflecting the sky. Ricky slowed, looked at it for a moment, then kept riding. No fear. No tightness. Just motion.



At the corner, he saw Brian's bike leaning against a mailbox. For a heartbeat, the old knot tried to tighten in his chest – but it didn't. Brian wasn't there. Maybe he'd gone inside. Maybe he'd found something else to do. Either way, Ricky didn't stop. He just kept pedaling.

The air smelled like burning wood and cold earth. Fall was fading fast.

When he reached his driveway, Charlotte was waiting with her helmet on, her smaller bike beside her. "Race you to the mailbox and back!" she called.

Ricky laughed. "You're on."

They took off together, tires crunching through the leaves. Charlotte's laughter rang through the air, bright and fearless. Ricky let her win – mostly – and when they coasted to a stop, she threw her hands up like a champion.

"You're getting faster," he said.

She grinned. "Maybe I'll be as fast as Johnny someday."

Ricky looked down at his own bike – the chipped paint, the scuffed pedals, the chain that still squeaked a little. He thought about Johnny's bike, sleek and quick, and about how he'd promised himself to make his own faster.

"Maybe we both will," he said.

They parked their bikes by the porch. The sky was turning pink, and the first cool breath of evening brushed against their faces. Ricky felt that same lightness he'd carried since yesterday – the kind that came from standing tall, from saying what needed to be said.

He looked toward the woods at the end of the road, where the trees were already bare and the ground shimmered faintly with frost.

Winter was coming.

And beyond those trees, another adventure awaited.